

Hybrid Events

The Future of the Event Industry



Introductory words by the founders

Flashback 2019: If you had asked what attendees thought of virtual events, most would have probably thought of jerky Skype video calls or perhaps an esports event. Who would have thought that only twelve months later we would effortlessly be jumping back and forth between different live streams and perfectly understand the rules of conduct for virtual meetings.

The last year has shown us that so much can be done virtually. Just as “many a meeting could have also been an e-mail”, we think to ourselves “many an event could also take place virtually” - maybe because we avoid long journeys for a short conversation or because we can still take part in a conference last-minute. There is simply no such thing as “booked out” on the internet.

But don't you sometimes ask yourself, if there is something missing? The familiarity, the coming together, the togetherness. The feeling of being present and sensing presence are lost when speaking into a webcam. It is precisely this conscious and subconscious communicative interaction that makes an event engaging, which is why we believe in a perfect mix: A gathering of people interacting and exchanging ideas and the chance to be part of it from a distance and at short notice. Hybrid events, the best of both worlds.



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Hybrid Events

Spoiler alert!

Let's face it: Hybrid events are currently developing into the event model of the future. The new reality has led to a real boom in virtual events. From meetings to conferences: everything now takes place online. But what will happen after Corona? Will virtual and hybrid events disappear again and we return to the old normal? We say: No!

The opportunities and strengths of virtual events are far too great for organisers not to make use of them in the future. If you combine these with the strengths of real, on-site events, you automatically end up with the concept that this eBook is about: hybrid events.

What is a hybrid event?

Hybrid events are events that can be attended by both physically present guests and an interactive virtual audience.

What may sound complicated is not: The forerunner of hybrid event formats are major sporting events such as football world championships or the Olympic Games: in addition to the audience's physical presence on-site, these events are broadcast to millions of people.

The interactive character of such an event makes it hybrid. We also know this from television: For example, live Saturday evening shows, in front of an audience, where TV viewers can interactively help shape the event by voting. This proves that hybrid event formats are not new, but the importance of virtuality and interactivity has increased drastically throughout the last year.

What can a hybrid event look like?

The [State of Event Management Report 2021](#) shows that 81% of participants plan to hold virtual events. Another study during the Global Meeting Industry Day, in April 2020, found that 62% of event planners will hold hybrid-style events in the future. But what do hybrid events look like in reality?

Many types of events are particularly suited to hybrid formats:

Hybrid Events Business Edition: Trade Fairs, Exhibitions

An exciting speaker doesn't have time to be on-site at your trade fair? Put him on a big screen! Innovative and still unusual methods, such as virtual reality and augmented reality, can also be used at hybrid events. With virtual reality, a user moves in a virtually created environment, while with augmented reality, objects are made visible in the real world with the help of software.

Virtual events are based on technology. Participation would not be possible without the use of computers and mobile devices. But there is more to virtual events than just video conferencing tools. The customer journey starts with the invitation and registration. A reliable guest management tool can help you from the start.

Hybrid Events Business Edition: Meetings, Conferences, Congresses, Product Presentations

Meetings, conferences and congresses are ideal for hybrid events. Contributions can be broadcast live to a professional audience that is not present, and feedback options via chats or circuits, to people who are not present, are also easy to include.

Hybrid Formats at Cultural Events

Cultural events are also ideally suited for a hybrid event format. Media and art in particular play with virtual formats such as augmented reality. Competitions and shows now also thrive on interactive contributions by spectators on site and at different locations.

What is not a hybrid event?

The key question is: What distinguishes a hybrid event from a live-streamed event? The answer is easy: the interactivity! A purely virtual broadcast of a physical event to an online audience does not make your event hybrid. However, if you use software and technical platforms, such as a chat or a survey, to offer this virtual audience a feedback option, you have a hybrid event. The decisive factor is the possibility for the audience to participate in shaping the event both on-site and online.

Accordingly, there are some events that are less suitable as hybrid events due to their character: parades, processions and carnivals, for example. Here, interactivity through an audience that is not present is extremely difficult. Internal events, such as team building events and staff events, usually require the personal presence of all participants.

Advantages of hybrid events

Further range

One of the biggest advantages for hybrid events is quite obvious: With virtual access to an event, you open up to guests who cannot attend in persona for various reasons – time, financial, spatial, environmental. You can also easily reach a dispersed audience around the world with this concept. Of course, this wider reach also benefits you as an organiser – for example, with higher brand awareness and more profit.

More interaction

Interactive online elements give your guests the feeling that they can help shape the hybrid event and, therefore, become a part of it. It does not have to be virtual and augmented reality in particular, although they are an exciting and new experience for many that remains in the memory for a long time. Often, the right tool for interaction on [Virtual Event Platform](#) can create a framework for engagement and interaction. With these elements, you can let your guests explore an event or set paths. It is also an exciting way for you to positively stand out from other events. The more individual and unique your event, the better it will be remembered by your guests.

ROI – Return on Investment

Admittedly, an interactive hybrid event first requires more planning and probably also costs for the acquisition of the software or platforms. However, the higher investment costs are amortised quite quickly through a higher number of participants and, therefore, higher turnover through ticket sales. Moreover, the software purchases are sustainable: they can be used for equivalent events in the future.

Sustainability

Not only the one-time purchase of the software is a sustainable acquisition with regard to future events. With a hybrid event you also help to do something good for the environment and create [Green Events](#). By attending virtually, your guests avoid distances that would otherwise probably have to be covered by flights or car journeys. That saves a lot of CO₂.

Your event is especially sustainable, if you can combine many small happenings at different locations into one large event through a hybrid concept.

Long-term commitment

A hybrid event can help you to bind your guests to your event series in the long term. This makes sense especially for recurring series.

First of all, virtuality lowers the threshold for participation: Guests can decide more spontaneously, don't have to plan a trip or even an overnight stay. Moreover, you have the chance to convince your guests of a new innovative concept. The possibility of interaction makes your event more individual and more likely to be remembered.

Follow-up and analysis

Digital attendee management facilitates the evaluation of attendee data from your event and does so in full compliance with the German Data Protection Act (GDPR). You can then record which aspects or presentations the visitors found particularly exciting or which elements were not so well received. This also helps you to plan the next event.

Challenges of hybrid events

Organising a hybrid event brings organisational challenges.

Staff requirements

In addition to looking after the guests on site, looking after the virtual guests is required, as well as monitoring the technology and ensuring that everything runs smoothly.

Technical challenges

Organising the virtual part of an event can be tricky, especially with new, unfamiliar software. The success of the event stands and falls with the functionality of the technology, because the cancellation rate of virtual events due to technical difficulties is very high.



Complex flow

Instead of just one group of live attendees, you need to ensure that both groups of participants, each with different needs, are satisfied at a hybrid event. This is especially challenging in terms of the information needed to participate, but also in terms of communication during the event.

Possibly fewer live participants

If you offer virtual participation to your guests, you have to expect that this may be preferred to on-site participation. With professional participant management, such a development can be tracked, planned and budgeted without problems, allowing capacities and materials to be rented, purchased and structured in a targeted manner.

Realisation of hybrid events

Are you new here?

You have never organised this event format before, but you definitely want your next event to be hybrid? Here we have summarised some recommendations for you. This is how you make sure your hybrid event is a huge success!

On our website we regularly add articles on virtual and hybrid events! You don't want to miss anything? Then register for our regular newsletter!

[Sign up here!](#)

Tips for the implementation of hybrid events

Tip 1: Test and competence

Especially if you are running a hybrid event for the first time: It's best to play it safe! Hire a technician or service provider who can take care of all technical matters on site.

Microphones, lighting, screens and also the virtual transmission should work smoothly. Be sure to test the hardware and software thoroughly, in several runs, so that it will definitely work at the time of your hybrid event.

Tip 2: Interactivity and individuality

Make your event as individual and personal as possible - for the participants on site, but especially for the virtual guests. Involve them, let them participate and have a say. Create many spaces for conversations, chats, question rounds and discussions, voting and feedback opportunities. Alternatively, establish a loyalty programme or incentives for further events.

Tips for the implementation of hybrid events

Tip 3: Camera, microphone, internet

As already mentioned: your hybrid event stands and falls with functioning technology. Good planning is essential here:

Internet

Make sure that the event location has a stable internet connection. You will probably need your own wired internet line just for streaming the event. Broadcasting via WIFI is not an option for a hybrid event.

Cameras

The choice and number of cameras will depend on the type of event. Will you include panel discussions or an interview with close-ups? Do you need shots from multiple angles and, therefore, multiple cameras? Then you need someone to handle these cameras. What devices are the guests using to receive the stream? Which screens are on site? Do you want to broadcast in HD? You should ask yourself all these questions in advance of your hybrid event.

Microphones

Make sure that high-quality microphones are used. Both for the speakers, the cameras and the audience. Wireless handheld microphones and microphone runners that can run through the audience to take questions are very useful here. Everything the microphones pick up should also be easily understood by the virtual audience of your event.



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Live events will definitely be back! But we've all come to love the benefits of virtual events too - being able to attend without travelling, for example. So hybrid events with the benefits of both worlds are the next logical step.”

Matthias Heicke

Co-Founder & CTO MATE

Tips for the implementation of hybrid events

Tip 4: Content marketing

Hybrid events as a business term are a relatively new concept. Just because you are using this innovative concept doesn't mean you don't need to promote your event.

Content and event marketing are an important strategy for hybrid events. You can raise awareness in advance and explain your concept in more detail. Social media channels are great for reaching your new, much larger audience and encouraging them to participate. During and after the event, you can use the material you produced for your social media channels to stay in touch with your target group.

Successful hybrid events offer the audience and online participants the opportunity to communicate and, at best, interact with each other and with speakers. Use tools and technological innovations to promote participant engagement.

Tip 5: Virtual tours

In the run-up to the event, you can get virtual and on-site guests in the mood for the event - for example, in a video about specifically themed rooms. During the event, it can be beneficial to share tours or diagrams - for the orientation of the guests on site and for virtual guests, who get the impression that they are there live.

The future is hybrid!

Conclusion

Hybrid events are becoming increasingly important in the event industry: This has many advantages. Both for guests, who can participate more independently of time and space, and for organisers. As an organiser, you can generate more reach for your event, which ensures more relevance and more participants.

With exciting innovative elements, you can stand out from the crowd and leave a lasting impression.

As soon as the crisis is overcome, events can take place as before and the number of attendees will return to the usual level. But we can assure: hybrid events will by no means become obsolete. On the contrary, every event can gain additional participants and reach through the virtual component.



Coming soon: Measuring the Success of Hybrid Events

How do you measure the success of a hybrid event? Which KPIs are particularly important for this? Learn everything you need to know in our eBook, from March 2021.

[See all Downloads](#)



You want more information on holding hybrid events?

Then please contact us!

You like our e-book? Then sign up for our newsletter! We will keep you up to date on the latest developments in digital and analogue event trends. The newsletter is available once a month - full of inspiration, no spam - promised!

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